

## 2020 - Prepare for a Unique Holiday

Everybody wants to be seen, heard and acknowledged. Family and friends gatherings are about creating and stabilizing the bond between us. To make your next holiday meaningful you want to find a way to hear, see and acknowledge everyone.

### Week(s) before meeting the family via video conferencing

- **Acknowledge and voice your emotions and expectations beforehand.**  
If you need to vent your anger, frustrations, sadness, worry..., call a family member or a friend and let it out way ahead of the actual meeting.  
From this conversation you can learn and understand what is really important to you and create a wishlist of what you need from this year's family gathering. This will then influence how you all together will create this unique holiday family gathering.
- **Let go of your ideal and most favorite Family Holiday and accept that this year will be unique.**
- **Prepare for a unique holiday gathering.**
- **Discuss in advance what you like to meet up for.** Instead of meeting as a whole group for 1h consider to split the meeting into smaller groups and smaller time frames. See ideas below.
- **Create and agree on particular rituals for this unique holiday gathering,** so that you can share them during the day.
- **Define storytelling rules.** See more on that below.

### A UNIQUE Holiday Family Gathering

- **Define what it is that makes this year's holiday gathering unique and meaningful!**  
Purposefully create an absolute unique experience. As this is hopefully a once in a lifetime experience, you can question all your rituals and traditions, turn them upside down and voice which ones are really important to you.
  - **What can you do to meet your needs** and make the celebration meaningful?
  - **How do you want to really connect** with your family and friends?
  - While you might not share one table, one meal together this year, **what can you share during the season?**

### Build connection through story and play!

- **Move and play outside and bring this back to the family through photos and videos.**
  - Build paper boats with notes of gratitude and let them go in a river stream (make a short video of it and share it).
  - Collect fall leaves and create a collage, build a snowman, sand castle, mud pile, ... (competition via video)

- Create a sensory story<sup>1</sup>: Find an item that reminds you of a favorite moment (maybe a shell from a beach), a spice that reminds you of your favorite food, a tool that describes your favorite activity, ...
- **Share your experience** through pictures, videos and stories in a group chat etc.
- Create a **scavenger hunt through your family history** (find something that appeals to all or each age group individually). Google "Family Scavenger Hunt" for more inspiration:
  - Find out what uncle X's favorite game was, when he was 5 years old.
  - Find pictures of places your grandparents lived at (on Google Maps) and have the grandparents tell a story about it?
  - Who is finally sharing this secret family recipe for X?
  - What funny story do your kids very likely do not know about you?
  - Who ever wore the worst halloween costume in your family? And what is the story? Vote.
  - Get out of the house and search for X (fall leaves, holiday decorations in the neighborhood, something purple, ...)
  - Make a collage about the stories you have heard.
  - Ask each family household to get a set of [story cubes](#) to get the stories flowing. Or use one of these [icebreaker cards](#) or [table topics cards](#).
  - Get the good old Scrabble boards or Trivial Pursuits games out and play alongside each other. Use a group text to share the most outrageous words. Maybe allow (finally!) to get the spelling wrong, use made up words etc. (as long as the person can defend their word/spelling).
  - Create thank you and gratitude notes and ensure that you mail them ahead of time to family members so that you can open them together and read them to each other.
- Consider who is alone in your circle or neighborhood and include them, by bringing them food and/or create gifts for them with your kids.

## When sharing stories...

Create some rules about how you want to share the stories based on the concept that everybody wants to be seen, heard, and acknowledged. That way you avoid talking all at once or above each other. Example:

Give each person some time to share a story (5-10 min). Everybody else is there to witness the story and to listen, without interruption. Thank the person for sharing the story. Pause (go offline for other activities) before you continue with the next story. Each person can build on what they heard or really focus only on what they like to share. When everybody has spoken there is time for further discussion (or breakout rooms). The listeners should listen with wonder and curiosity: I wonder why this story is so important to him/her to share with us.

## More books and resources with creative ideas to do offline:

- **24/6: Giving Up Screens One Day a Week to Get More Time, Creativity, and Connection** by Tiffany Shlain
- **Conscious Creativity: Look, Connect, Create** by Philippa Stanton
- [Virtual Recreation Information](#) form the City of Santa Cruz
- My **101 Self-Care Sheet** has plenty of ideas on movement, play and creativity-
- My blog post: [How to Ground Yourself in Times of Ambiguity](#)
- [17 Fun Quarantine Thanksgiving Ideas 2020 - How to Celebrate Thanksgiving at Home](#)
- [29 Best Thanksgiving Games for Adults and Kids 2020 - DIY Games to Play at Thanksgiving](#)

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Conscious Creativity* by Philippa Stanton